

Georges Adéagbo was born in Cotonou, Benin (West Africa) in 1942. He went to law school in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, and then continued his studies in France. When his father died in 1971, he returned to Benin. There, working in isolation from his family and society, he assembled materials into private installations and environments. By the early 1990s, his work began to achieve public recognition. In 1999 he won the Prize of Honor at the 48th annual Venice Biennale for *The Story of The Lion*. Adéagbo resists categorization: "I am not an artist, I do not make art, I am just a messenger."

Adéagbo's installations are created from items he has collected from different points of his lifetime. By juxtaposing one piece of his life with another, Adéagbo creates provoking stories with his work, which ultimately bring light and symbolism to objects that once seemed mundane. "I do not pick up just anything. All the objects I collect are part of the story of my life," he says. Adéagbo is an "artist-collector" who systematically organizes books, newspaper clippings, fabrics, sculptures and paintings. Out of this come large site-specific installations which bring out themes such as the relationship between Africa and Europe, the history of colonization, the drama of war and slavery, cultural cannibalism, religion, democracy, and art. His work transcends the geographic, social, and psychological barriers introduced by politics and intolerance in order to rethink our history with conviction that another's viewpoint might help us not only to understand the times in which we live, but also to see our past in a different light, placed into a context of relativity and dialogue.

MIT OpenCourseWare  
<http://ocw.mit.edu>

21M.630J / 21A.114J / 21H.106J / 21L.008J / 21W.741J / 24.912J Black Matters: Introduction to Black Studies  
Fall 2009

For information about citing these materials or our Terms of Use, visit: <http://ocw.mit.edu/terms>.